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STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

**Niagara Region
Review Commission**

NIAGARA REGION REVIEW COMMISSION

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

July 1988



A publication of the:

Niagara Region Review Commission
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NIAGARA REGION REVIEW COMMISSION

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

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THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMISSION

Purpose:

The purpose of the review is to examine, evaluate and report to the Minister on various representation, accountability, functional and financing issues and on the division of responsibilities in the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

Scope:

Within the context of the overall purpose, the review will address two general topic areas:

- I. Accountability and Representation;
- II. Functions, Costs and Financing.

Accountability and Representation

Part I of the study will deal with those issues related to council accountability and responsiveness. In particular, the study will address the following:

- (a) Size, structure and selection of regional council including a review of the system of directly-elected councillors and the relationship between membership on regional council and on area councils;
- (b) Selection of Regional Chairman;
- (c) Relationship of local boards and commissions to regional council including representation on the Board of Commissioners of Police.

Functions, Costs and Financing

Part II of the study will deal with issues related to the provision of services (functions) by the Regional Municipality of Niagara. The review will include:

- (a) An examination of the nature of services provided at the Regional level including an historical review of service provision in Niagara, and including the Regional role in the provision of services which are a shared responsibility such as planning, economic development, the road system and the water and sewer systems;
- (b) An historical and comparative cost study of services provided by the Region including an analysis of factors affecting costs over time and a comparison of costs for Regional services in Niagara with costs in other regions and non-regional city-settings;
- (c) An analysis of funding arrangements for services provided by the Region including a comparison of funding available to the Niagara Region to that of other regions and to area municipalities providing the same types of services.

THE PROCESS TO DATE

In February of 1988, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Honourable John Eakins, appointed Harry Kitchen as Chairman of the Niagara Region Review Commission. In early April, David Siegel was appointed as Research Director. These two appointees constitute the entire professional staff directly employed by the Commission.

The process began with the Commissioner meeting Regional Council, the councils of the twelve area municipalities and senior staff of the thirteen municipalities. At each of these meetings, participants, either collectively or individually, were invited to assist the Commission by providing information on the actual workings of Regional Government in Niagara, and to offer comments, views or perceptions on how Regional government ought to work. To this point, the Commission can state emphatically that it is pleased with both the quantity and quality of the response.

In addition, many other organizations and individuals have made their concerns known to the Commission either through written briefs or direct communication. These have been equally helpful. Further feedback has been garnered from reactions to a number of speeches delivered by the Chairman and the Research Director to service clubs and other special purpose groups or organizations within the Region.

A great deal of careful analysis and many thoughtful suggestions were provided to the Commission in four public meetings held in May. These meetings, held in St. Catharines, Port Colborne, Niagara Falls and Grimsby, were attended by more than 120 people. While the written and oral submissions indicated some differences of opinion on the recommendations that the Commission ought to make in resolving specific issues, there was considerable consistency in the perception and identification of existing problems.

Since all of the input received has been important in assisting the Commission with its identification of areas that are deemed to be problematic, the Commission feels that it is crucial that this information be shared with the citizens of Niagara. Hence, this publication has two purposes. First, it identifies the issues that the Commission deems to be important and invites comments on the appropriateness and accuracy of this list. Obviously, additional items will be added, if strong representations are made within the next few

weeks. Second, individuals and groups are invited to provide the Commission with their recommendations on the issues of concern to them. These recommendations must be capable of being defended though the use of a solid rationale and the support of factual evidence, wherever possible.

THE FUTURE PLANS OF THE COMMISSION

While this document describes the issues that the Commission has identified as warranting further research, it does not automatically follow that recommendations for change will be made in these areas. It simply means that sufficient concern has been expressed to justify an in-depth investigation of these issues with the intention of making recommendations that could range from a continuation of the status quo to some radical restructuring.

The Commission is currently in the process of hiring a few independent consultants to undertake major analytical reviews of some of the issues listed in this document. The consultants studies, once completed, will become public documents. They will provide the Commission with background information on the issue addressed and set out alternative ways of dealing with the issue. In some cases, the reports may contain the consultant's own recommendations. Where this happens, it is important to emphasize that these recommendations will be the conclusions of the consultants and may or may not be accepted by the Commission. In any case, the consultants reports will be available for public discussion and released in two batches, one in September and the other in November.

Following the release of the consultants reports, a second set of public hearings will be held in early December. At this time, the public will have an opportunity to comment on the reports and their recommendations and to provide alternative analysis and recommendations.

After receipt of the public input in December, the Commission will begin preparing its final report including a series of recommendations. The deadline for submission of this report is February 28, 1989, when it will be delivered to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

THE COMMISSION'S SCHEDULE

1988

February Appointment of Chairman

March-June Meetings with councils and staff

late May First set of public hearings

early July Release "Statement of the Issues"

early Sept Release first batch of research studies

mid Nov Release second batch of research studies

early Dec Second set of public meetings

1989

Feb 28 Report sent to Minister of Municipal Affairs

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

The issues listed in this section are categorized under three general headings; specifically, those revolving around the election of regional councillors and the regional chairperson; those dealing with the relationship of the Police Commission and other Regional boards, commissions and agencies to regional council; and those falling within the service delivery, economic and financial area.

The discussion of each issue is conducted in two parts. The first, entitled "The Background," provides some information on the issue and why it is of such concern. The second, entitled "The Issues," contains some of the questions that will be addressed by the Commission. In attempting to gain some useful information and assistance from the public, the Commission invites responses to these questions.

While this list of issues is not final, there are limits to what can be added. The Commission was established with a particular terms of reference. It does not have the mandate, time or staff to resolve any and all problems that people have or perceive they have with Regional government. The Commission will not intervene in those problems where citizens have been unable to get regional and/or local governments to accede to specific requests. For example, the "Persons United for Self-Help" have made a convincing case for greater sensitivity to the needs of the physically handicapped in the design of buildings and the provision of regional transit services. While the Commission may be sympathetic to these concerns, it believes that regional and local governments must respond to such requests in the appropriate political forum.

Further kinds of requests that will not be addressed by the Commission include those where citizens have come forward with grievances involving individual matters such as specific decisions made by local and/or regional councils about planning and zoning matters or the extension of services to specific properties.

The Commission cannot play the role of an ombudsman, nor can it monitor the day-to-day activities of local and regional councils and comment on their decisions. In many cases, there are appropriate provincial and regional appeal bodies set up to handle such concerns. In essence, the Commission was not established to serve as an additional court of appeal on specific matters

which have been handled by, and ought to be handled by councils and the appropriate appeal mechanisms.

Even though certain issues will not be dealt with, the Commission still has an extensive mandate, as witnessed by the discussion in the following few pages.

REPRESENTATION AND ELECTION ISSUES

NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF COUNCILLORS

The Background

Regional government is a form of federation. One of the classic problems in a federation of units of unequal size is the allocation of representation among the units. Not surprisingly, the smaller units generally argue in favour of equal representation for all units. On the contrary, the larger units argue that equity is best served when representatives are allocated on the basis of representation by population ("rep-by-pop").

If a strict "rep-by-pop" formula were adopted in Niagara, the smallest area municipality, with a population of approximately 6,000 people, would have one representative, and the Region as a whole, with a population of over 360,000, would have a total of 60 representatives. Not only would this total be too large to allow for meaningful debate, but many people would also find it unconscionable to have the smallest municipality so totally outweighed by the larger ones. Fairness in representative may suggest a departure from strict mathematical rules.

The usual method of coping with this problem in regional governments in Ontario has been to adopt a system of modified "rep-by-pop." This system recognizes the "rep-by-pop" principle by providing more populous areas with more representatives than smaller ones, but it recognizes the concerns of the smaller areas by giving them slightly more representatives than they would be entitled to by rigid mathematical calculation. The appendix indicates that this is how this problem has been dealt with in Niagara.

This leads directly to the question of the ideal council size. The argument is sometimes made that the current size of twenty-nine councillors plus the Chairperson is a bit too large for effective debate. However, there is an obvious trade-off here. A larger council means that each councillor is representing fewer citizens and so should improve the accountability relationship. Thus, a larger council provides for better representation, but makes debate unwieldy.

The Issues

How many councillors should represent each area municipality?

How many Regional Councillors should there be in total?

DIRECT VERSUS INDIRECT ELECTION OF COUNCILLORS

The Background

There is a wide diversity in the method of selection of councillors in different Regional Governments. The earliest model employed in Metro Toronto and in the other regional governments was indirect election of councillors. In this method, councillors served on Regional Council by virtue of their election to some office in an area municipality, for example, Mayor, member of Board of Control, top vote-getter in a multi-member ward. In Niagara, the Mayors of the twelve area municipalities are indirectly elected to Regional Council.

Niagara was the first Region in which direct election was employed for the election of some Regional Councillors. Seventeen of the twenty-nine Regional Councillors are elected directly by voters to serve on Regional Council and only on Regional Council.

A third arrangement is referred to as the joint-seat or double-direct system. In this system, candidates stand for election to a particular seat which is identified as serving on the councils of both the area municipality and the Regional government. This varies from the traditional indirect election system in that candidates must specify their desires to serve on Regional Council before the election; they do not become Regional Councillors as a by-product of the result of another election. Thus, voters know in advance which candidates are standing for election to both councils and which candidates are standing for election to the area municipal council only.

The advantages of indirect election are:

Councillors serving on both tiers are able to act as links between the two tiers and so facilitate communication and cooperation between them.

Councillors who serve on both tiers can ensure that the interests of their area municipalities are strongly represented at the Region. Concerns of area municipalities will have to be taken into account in making Regional decisions.

The advantages of direct election are:

Serving on both councils (and their committees) imposes a significant time commitment on those elected. A person serving on only one council will

be better able to devote more time to his or her responsibilities. When people serve on both councils, it is frequently the role of regional councillor which must suffer, because aldermen are elected first and foremost to deal with local issues.

Councillors are likely to be less parochial and think more in region-wide terms because they are not also members of an area municipal council.

Serving on only one council also eliminates any possibility of a conflict of interest between the two duties.

The advantages of the joint-seat system are:

It retains the benefits of having a linkage between the two tiers, but ensures that those elected will see their prime responsibility to the regional government.

The Issue

How should Regional Councillors be elected:

- direct election, or
- indirect election, or
- joint-seat system?

WARD VERSUS AT-LARGE ELECTION OF COUNCILLORS

The Background

In all of the area municipalities in Niagara that select a councillor by direct election, the election takes place on an at-large basis across the entire municipality. Some people have suggested to the Commission that, in the larger cities, a system of election by wards would be more appropriate.

The advantages of the current, at-large system are:

Parochialism is limited because candidates must think of their profile in the entire area municipality.

Candidates draw their support from the entire area municipality, and not just some limited pocket of it.

The advantages of a ward system would be:

Councillors who represent a smaller area will be more knowledgeable about the problems of that area and more directly accountable to its residents.

Candidates for council will find it easier to campaign in a smaller area than the entire municipality. They will not have to spend as much of their time and money publicizing their campaign.

Coincidentally, incumbent councillors seeking re-election will start on a more equal footing with their less well-known challengers. In the at-large system, it is very difficult for a new candidate to make his or her name known on a city-wide basis, while the incumbent benefits from the name recognition that goes with serving on council.

Citizens should be able to make a more thoughtful choice in casting their ballots because they will not be confronted with a lengthy list of names from which they may select several.

The Issue

In those area municipalities which elect more than one Regional Councillor, should the Councillors be elected by ward or at-large?

THE ROLE OF MAYORS ON REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Background

Since the Region was created, the Mayors of all area municipalities have served on Regional Council. This is the system used in all other Regional Governments in Ontario. However, the issue of whether Mayors should continue to sit on Regional Council has been raised.

The advantages of having the Mayors serve on Regional Council are:

The Mayors serve as a direct link between the Regional Council and area municipalities and can help to coordinate the actions of the two tiers.

Citizens see the Mayors as the most visible, accessible and accountable local official; thus, citizens bring their concerns to the Mayor first and will continue to do so regardless of the electoral arrangements.

Mayors have an important role in representing the interest of their municipalities at the Regional level. This is particularly significant in a system in which the other regional councillors are directly elected, because the Mayors are the only officials who serve on both tiers.

The disadvantages of having the Mayors serve on Regional Council are:

Mayors are very busy in their capacity as Mayors of the area municipalities and do not have adequate time to devote to the activities of both the area municipality and the Regional Council. When one role must suffer, it is likely to be the role of Regional Councillor, because Mayors must pay attention to their duties in the area municipality first and foremost.

The fact that some politicians serve on both tiers of government tends to confuse the roles of the two governments in the minds of many taxpayers and so inhibits the development of a separate Regional identity.

The Issue

Should the Mayors of the area municipalities continue to serve as Regional Councillors?

SELECTION OF THE REGIONAL CHAIRPERSON

The Background

Traditionally in regional governments in Ontario, the Regional Chairperson has been selected by a vote of Regional Council at the first meeting of the Council after a general election. This person then continues to serve as Chairperson for the three year term of that council. The person selected is not required to be an elected member of Regional Council, although in most cases the Chairperson has been selected from the ranks of Regional Council. When the person selected is an elected Regional Councillor, an election is held to replace that person as Councillor.

Both in the Niagara Region and in other regions there has been much discussion of direct election of the Regional Chairperson, that is, election of the Regional Chairperson by a vote of the general electorate.

The advantages of the current system of selection by the Regional Council are:

The Chairperson is directly accountable to the Councillors with whom he or she must work most closely. This is likely to ensure that the Chairperson will be able to pursue a strong leadership role.

A candidate for Chairperson would not have to run an expensive campaign for office throughout the entire Region. This consideration is particularly significant in the Niagara region where the media is highly fragmented.

The advantages of a system of selection by direct election are:

The Chairperson would have to seek election from the entire region and so would be directly accountable to residents of the Region, unlike the present system of indirect accountability.

The Issue

How should the Chairperson of the Niagara Regional Council be selected?

-by vote of the Council

-by vote of the general electorate

A COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Background

Many large municipal councils have a Coordinating Committee which coordinates the work of the other council committees and has special responsibilities in such areas as personnel, budgeting, and property management. This committee would usually be chaired by the head of Council. It can meet, in camera, to discuss certain delicate areas such as personnel selection or discipline, or property assembly.

The Regional Municipality of Niagara has never had such a committee, but some people have argued that it would be useful. The existing committee system could be re-organized so that this would not necessarily constitute an additional committee. For example, preparation of the annual budget is currently the main responsibility of the Finance Committee. If that work were given to the Coordinating Committee, the Finance Committee could be disbanded.

The advantages of having an Coordinating Committee are:

The Coordinating Committee would be smaller than the full council and so debate and discussion would be facilitated.

The Coordinating Committee could assist the Regional Chairperson in providing leadership and direction to the Region. However, this committee could not make any final, binding decisions without the concurrence of the full council.

Certain difficult and delicate issues could be discussed in the committee thus saving the time of full council.

The disadvantages of having a Coordinating Committee are:

Since the Coordinating Committee should probably have at least one representative from each area municipality, it would consist of at least twelve members.

Since the Coordinating Committee would probably have higher status than the other committees, this would create two classes of councillor.

If the Region decided to have a Coordinating Committee, a subsequent issue would involve the adoption of a method for selecting its members. There are basically two alternatives: selection by vote of Regional Council or selection by the Regional Chairperson, possibly with some sort of confirmation by the full Council.

The advantage of selection by vote of Regional Council is:

The members of the Committee will have the confidence of the majority of the members of Council, but not necessarily the confidence of the Regional Chairperson with whom they must work closely.

The advantage of selection by the Regional Chairperson is:

The members of the Committee will have the confidence of the Regional Chairperson so that the group could potentially function like an informal cabinet in providing legislative leadership.

The Issues

Should the Region have a Coordinating Committee?

If so, how should the members of the committee be chosen?

ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIPS WITH AGENCIES, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REGIONAL COUNCIL AND THE POLICE COMMISSION

The Background

The Regional Council has no direct control over the Niagara Regional Police Force. The Force is governed by the Niagara Region Board of Commissioners of Police. This body consists of five members, three of whom are appointed by the province and two of whom are appointed by the Regional Council. In spite of the fact that Regional Council has no control over the police force, the Region is obligated to provide any funds which the Force needs to carry out its operations. If the Region feels that a particular request for funds is excessive, it can appeal to the Ontario Police Commission. These appeals are quite rare. The Regional Municipality of Niagara did appeal the amount requested on one occasion in the 1970s, but its appeal was turned down. In 1988, the budget of the police force was \$42.6 million, or 22% of the total regional budget.

The advantages of the existing arrangement are:

The police are insulated from direct political control. The Force can carry on its duties without fear of offending some politician or group of politicians and suffering budgetary retaliation.

The disadvantages of the existing arrangement are:

A total insulation from political control might not be a good thing. While there are dangers associated with political interference in individual cases, it would not seem inappropriate for elected politicians to be involved in discussing matters of policy and administration.

This is particularly the case with regard to budgetary matters. Councillors resent being forced to pay large sums to an agency over which they have no control.

The existing arrangement muddles accountability for policing. The average citizen tends to assume that Regional Council has some control over the police. Since the Council appoints a minority of members of the police commission, it does have some influence on police matters, but the majority of members are appointed by the province.

The Issues

Is the existing arrangement appropriate?

Should the Board of Commissioners of Police be re-constituted so that it consists of a majority of Regional Government appointees?

Should the entire structure be revised to provide council with more direct control over matters of policy and finance affecting the police? It is understood that if this were done, some method must be devised to prevent political interference in individual cases.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REGIONAL COUNCIL AND OTHER AGENCIES, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS

The Background

In addition to the Police Commission, there are a number of other agencies, boards, and commissions that are sometimes considered to be a part of Regional Government because they are financed by Regional funds, but are not under the direct control of the Regional Council. Some of these agencies are involved in very important activities and spend significant sums of money. Examples include Family and Children's Services, the Niagara Region Development Corporation, and the Land Division Committee.

The accountability relationship between these agencies and the Regional Council can vary noticeably. Generally, some, if not all, of the members of the agency's governing board are appointed by the Regional Council. In addition, council is not obliged to provide funds, which means that it can exercise a certain amount of influence through the control of the purse strings.

While none of these agencies has as much autonomy as the Police Commission, the concept of the "arm's length" agency can raise questions of muddled accountability. For example, some people believe that council can exercise fairly strong control over the activities of these agencies, whereas, in practice, its ability to do so is limited.

These agencies were established and placed outside direct control of Regional council for a number of different reasons. These may have had something to do with removing the agency from the direct influence of "politics," or wanting to establish a governing board with particular kinds of expertise. While, these reasons may have been persuasive historically, they might or might not still be valid in 1988.

The Issues

Is there some sound reason why each of these separate bodies ought to have some autonomy from the normal operation of Regional Government?

Would the overall coordination and delivery of services be improved if some of the organizations that are currently somewhat independent of direct council control become more directly accountable to it?

SERVICE DELIVERY, ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

PUBLIC WORKS

The Background

There appears to be considerable concern and dissatisfaction over the perceived duplication in the provision of public works in the Niagara Region. Much of this concern, as reported to the Commission, derives directly from the split jurisdiction (that is, both local and regional governments) involved in the provision of these services; for example, certain roads are regional while others are local. Furthermore, within urban areas where the road allowances are regional, many services including sidewalks, street lighting and sanitary and water services are the responsibility of the area municipalities. In addition, the region is responsible for trunk water and sewage lines, sewage treatment and pollution control plants while local governments are responsible for water distribution and sewage collection.

Given this, the Commission's intent is to examine and describe the extent to which duplication actually exists. Where problems are observed, recommendations leading to improved efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public works services will be formulated.

Potential services to be evaluated for duplication and subsequent recommendations include:

- i) roads, bridges (including maintenance, snow ploughing and sanding) and signs
- ii) sidewalks, street lighting and parade permits
- iii) trunk water and sewer lines, water distribution and sewage collection, sewage treatment and pollution control
- iv) solid waste collection and disposal
- v) emergency plans

The Issue

Are there other public works services that should be included in the evaluation?

What level of government should be responsible for providing these services and why?

LAND USE PLANNING

The Background

Land use planning in the Niagara Region falls under the jurisdiction of a number of governments, including the Region, area municipalities, and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. The Niagara Parks Commission has a major presence in the area through its extensive network of parks and may also impact on the planning function.

The presence of so many governments in the planning process has led to a number of submissions to the Commission criticising the current arrangements. Since most of the criticisms claim considerable overlap in some of the planning functions, the Commission will attempt to identify the areas of overlap or conflict; to examine the relationship between the Regional government, local governments, the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Province in planning matters; and to develop proposals for an improved planning structure in the Region. More specifically, this examination will focus on the process of planning and the consequent administration of official plans, zoning by-laws, subdivision approvals, land severances, minor variances and related regulatory procedures.

In essence, the Commission is concerned with the relationship, in plan preparation and administration, amongst the various planning partners within the Niagara Region. It is not within the mandate of the Commission to examine the content or quality of official plans or other planning instruments, the merits of individual planning and zoning decisions, or the organization or practices of individual planning agencies or departments except insofar as these have a bearing on the relationship between the various planning authorities.

The Issue

Are there additional planning functions that should be included in the evaluation?

What level of government should be responsible for plan preparation and administration of the various components of the planning operation and why?

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Background

Concern over the level of government responsible for economic development has emerged in the Niagara Region because both the Region and many of the local governments are separately pursuing their own development strategies and policies. This has created an environment where governments have an incentive to compete with each other for a relatively finite number of new businesses/industries and where duplication in the provision of a specific service seems to exist. Furthermore, there is additional interest in the extent to which economic development activities, by both lower and upper tier governments, are effective in terms of seeking their stated objectives.

Regional involvement comes through the Niagara Region Development Corporation (NRDC). Local government involvement varies across area municipalities, but it ranges from municipalities with specific departments solely responsible for economic development activities, to municipalities that combine these activities with the planning department, to municipalities that have no formal involvement in economic development activities at all.

Current policies designed to promote economic development activities in Ontario are restricted by Section 112 of the Municipal Act. Specifically, this legislation states that Notwithstanding any general or specific Act, a council shall not grant bonuses in aid of any manufacturing or other industrial or commercial enterprise'. In other words, municipalities, in attempting to attract new businesses/industries, cannot compete with each other through the use of direct financial perks (such as lowering property taxes or providing services at lower prices than those charged for other users in the community).

The Commission's interest in this issue has emerged because of the possible duplication of activities. More directly, the Commission is interested in the extent to which duplication actually exists; the effectiveness of current practices in terms of meeting the stated objectives; and whether the fostering and promotion of economic development activities can be handled more efficiently and effectively if left to one level of government? If the answer to the latter is yes, then the question that follows is "which is the appropriate level"?

The Issue

Since the Municipal Act does not allow municipalities (regional or local) to offer financial incentives in attracting new development, the question that must be asked, then, is whether there is a role for any involvement in economic development activities at either the regional or local government level? If the answer is no, why is it no? If, on the other hand, the answer is yes, what level of government ought to be engaged in this activity and why?

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE ISSUES

The Background

Ever since the formation of regional government, there have been concerns that the costs incurred by regional governments have been excessive resulting in greatly increased property tax burdens. The absolute numbers make it clear that there have been significant increases in both taxes and spending. However, the question of whether these changes have been excessive is complicated because the increase might have been due to inflation, significant changes in levels of service, and requirements for higher standards imposed by other levels of government.

The Commission will be analysing revenue and expenditure data for the last ten years to identify trends in the sources of revenue and the functions on which the funds have been spent. This analysis will compare trends in Niagara with those in other regions. A similar analysis will be provided for area municipalities. The raw material for this analysis will be available to the public in September as one of the special studies which the Commission will be releasing.

The Issues

Are there other revenue and expenditure issues that ought to be addressed in the Commission's study?

Are levels of revenue and expenditure in Niagara roughly comparable to those in other regions? If not, what specific items account for the differences?

What has been the trend in revenue and expenditure in the Niagara region over the last ten years?

COMMUNICATIONS

The Background

In the public meetings conducted by the Commission, it was frequently suggested that the Region has done an inadequate job of communicating with its citizens and making known its service responsibilities. This message was especially strong at the public meetings in Port Colborne and Grimsby--the area located the greatest distance from the Regional headquarters building in Thorold.

In other jurisdictions, governments have adopted clear communications strategies aimed at making certain that citizens have a clear understanding of what services are provided and how they can participate in council deliberations about the provision of services and other issues. For example, some cities publish weekly advertisements containing information about the operating hours of public facilities, the times of public meetings, and other information of importance to citizens.

Other governments have radically decentralized their operations, especially with regard to obtaining information and applications for licenses and permits. In this arrangement, every community has a "one-stop shopping" centre so that citizens can conduct their business with the government without leaving their home communities.

The Issues

Should the Regional Government undertake a deliberate communications strategy so that citizens will begin to have a better understanding of exactly what the Region does?

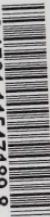
Should the Region radically decentralize its operations so that it could provide "one-stop shopping" centres in several areas of the region?

APPENDIX

CURRENT DATA ABOUT THE AREA MUNICIPALITIES

	Number of Councillors	Population	Households	Assessment (thousands)	Area (hectares)
Fort Erie	2	24,073	11,521	65,445	16,459
Grimsby	2	16,719	5,828	38,228	6,494
Lincoln	2	14,404	4,961	30,200	15,286
Niagara Falls	4	71,088	27,206	200,265	20,447
Niagara-on-the-Lake	2	12,359	4,716	28,356	12,599
Pelham	1	11,835	4,270	26,644	11,527
Port Colborne	2	18,653	7,650	49,058	11,552
St. Catharines	7	123,014	47,944	290,694	9,628
Thorold	2	16,086	5,907	48,439	8,491
Wainfleet	1	5,983	2,709	12,840	21,507
Welland	3	45,173	17,229	116,460	8,329
West Lincoln	1	9,925	3,088	19,404	37,509
TOTAL	29	345,239	131,508	860,588	163,369

SOURCES: Population (1985), Households (1986), and Area figures were taken from the Municipal Directory (1988). Assessment figures (1988) were obtained from the Region's 1988 budget.



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